



## Navajo Nation Council – Office of the Speaker

Contact: Jerome Clark

Phone: (928) 871-7160

Cell: (928) 637-5603

[nnlb.communications@gmail.com](mailto:nnlb.communications@gmail.com)

[www.navajonationcouncil.org](http://www.navajonationcouncil.org)

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### NEWS RELEASE:

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#### **Naa'bik'iyati' Committee approves forming of water rights settlement task force**

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz. – On Wednesday, May 16, the Naa'bik'iyati Committee of the 22<sup>nd</sup> Navajo Nation Council passed legislation 0134-12 to establish a task force that will focus on hearings related to water rights.

The committee voted eight supporting and seven opposing to appoint Council Delegates Dwight Witherspoon, Lorenzo Curley, Walter Phelps, and Alton Shepherd.

Speaker Johnny Naize will also serve alongside the appointed delegates.

Legislation 0134-12, sponsored by Council Delegate Jonathan Hale, resulted from a directive on March 29 during a Naa'bik'iyati' Committee meeting.

Since the S. 2109 was introduced on February 14 by Senator Jon Kyl, Navajo communities have actively participated in ongoing discussions related to the Navajo Hopi Little Colorado River Settlement as well as S. 2109.

The Navajo Nation Council has assured the public and maintained the position that all decisions regarding water rights settlement would be open to the public with full transparency. The Council currently does not have an official position.

In order for the Navajo Nation Council to take an official position on the water rights settlement it will have to occur through the legislative process as mandated by Title II.

Broadly, the process requires a council delegate to sponsor the legislation; the legislation is then assigned to the appropriate committees; the legislation is posted to the Navajo Nation Council website for a period of five days, during which comments can be submitted electronically; after the five-day bill hold period the legislation will be considered by each committee it was assigned to; the legislation will eventually make its way to the Navajo Nation Council where final authority rests.

When the legislation is sponsored it will be posted on the Navajo Nation Council website for the 5-day bill hold. Navajo Nation citizens will have the opportunity to comment during the bill hold period and during committee and council deliberation on the legislation.

Although the task force has not established a plan on how they will approach the water rights settlement, when such plans are confirmed it will be made available publicly.

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